



## DECISION MEMO

Morrison Trail Improvement Project (2019) – Decision #1  
USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region 9, Allegheny National Forest  
Bradford Ranger District  
McKean County, Pennsylvania

### BACKGROUND

The Bradford Ranger District proposed the Morrison Trail Improvement project to provide additional recreational opportunities and improve the visitor experience on the trail. The project is located on the Morrison Trail, approximately 18 miles west of Bradford, PA.

#### *Existing Condition*

The Morrison Trail consists of two loops – Morrison and Rimrock – that total 10.8 miles. The trail is classified as Trail Class 1 – minimally developed – and is open to hiking and bicycling. The trail is considered one of the more popular trails on the District, with some users utilizing the Morrison Boat Access Campground for overnight camping. Portions of the trail are quite rugged, while other portions are highly developed (for example, the first mile has been graveled).

This project proposes to add two trail segments to the existing trail. Trail “A” is a new 1.8 mile loop segment that would be added to the Rimrock Loop (the new trail link is located approximately 1.5 miles from the trailhead). Trail “B” is a new 1.6 mile trail segment that will begin at Kinzua Beach and intersect the Rimrock Loop south of Campbell Run in the vicinity of a trail re-route that was approved last year.

#### *Desired Condition*

The desired condition is a sustainable trail, which has few water crossings, adequate drainage, average grade no greater than 10% with frequent grade reversals for drainage and which lies gently on the land with side slopes that allow for cross drainage and future maintenance.

### DECISION

I have decided to authorize the Morrison Trail Improvement Project as described below.

1. Construction of Trail A (approximately 1.8 miles): Installation of the new alignment would be built to Trail Class 2 standards – the trail tread will be 18-24” and the target grade will be 5-10%. The trail construction will involve minimal tree cutting (no trees larger than 6” will be cut).

This decision does not authorize the construction of Trail B (Kinzua Beach to the Rimrock Trail). The alignment for that proposed trail is undergoing additional resource review. A separate decision for that segment may be issued in the future.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions, 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 220.6(e)(1), is identified in agency procedures as Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 sections 32.2. This category of action is applicable because the decision involves the construction and reconstruction of trails.

This project was reviewed by Forest Service resource specialists and no significant impacts were identified. Furthermore, I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist. The following extraordinary circumstances were reviewed and/or considered for this project:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species;
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds;
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas;
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites; and
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS.

#### **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

In May 2019, the project proposal was scoped with the public via a direct mailing and a press release. In addition, the proposal was shared with Tribes that have a historical interest in activities on the Allegheny National Forest. No comments were received on the proposal.

#### **FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

I find this project conforms to direction from the Allegheny Land and Resource Management Plan (2007) and relevant laws, regulation and policy including:

- Federal Land Policy and Management Act
- National Forest Management Act
- Endangered Species Act<sup>1</sup>
- Sensitive Species (Forest Service Manual 2670)
- Clean Water Act
- Wetlands (Executive Order 11990)
- Floodplains (Executive Order 11988)
- Federal Cave Resources Protection Act
- National Historic Preservation Act and Archaeological Resources Protection Act<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Project activities are expected to have “no effect” on endangered, threatened or sensitive species.

<sup>2</sup> A cultural resources report was provided to the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for review. Comments specific to impacts from project activities were not received from the SHPO.

- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)
- National Environmental Policy Act

**ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES**

This decision is not subject to administrative review or appeal.

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

This decision may be implemented immediately.

**CONTACT**

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: from Joshua Bridge, Recreation Lead, Bradford District Ranger Station, 29 Forest Service Drive, Bradford, Pennsylvania; Phone: voice 814-383-6098; e-mail: jbridge@fs.fed.us.

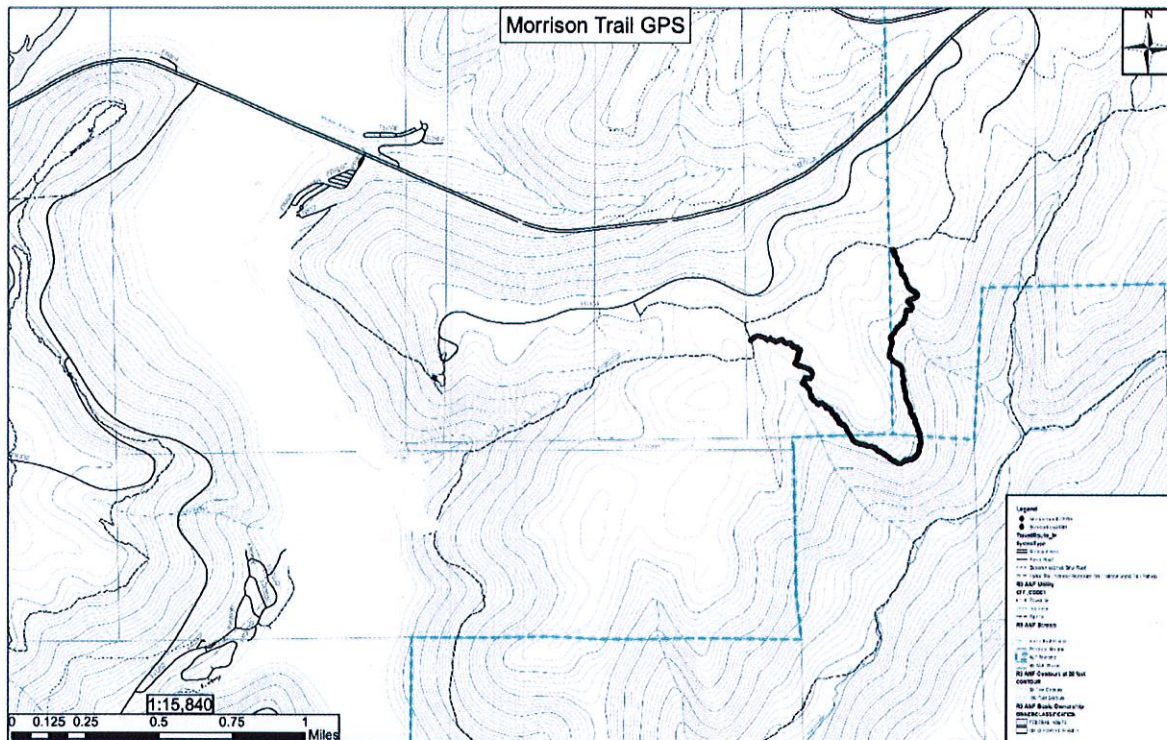
  
RICHARD HATFIELD  
District Ranger

Aug 12, 2019  
Date



## Appendix A. Project Map

The map below shows the approved new trail segment.



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